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Christianities in Oceania: Historical Genealogies and Anthropological Insularities

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Cristianismo en Oceanía: genealogías históricas e insularidades antropológicas

Simon Coleman

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Simon Coleman

"Christianities in Oceania: Historical Genealogies and Anthropological Insularities"

Introduction: The History of Islands

I have a much treasured, if diminutive, volume on my bookshelves. Its title is *A Narrative of the Voyages Round the World, Performed by Captain James Cook* and it was written by Andrew Kippis, a prolific British author of the latter half of the eighteenth century. My edition—one of many produced in the nineteenth century, reflecting the lasting popularity of the book—was published in London, probably in the 1820s. Alongside the details of Cook's adventures, the book contains a striking document in its opening pages: a "letter" dated June 13, 1788, addressed to no less a personage than George III. In this short addition to the text, Kippis dedicates his work to the monarch whose patronage is said to have enabled Cook to execute his "vast undertakings", and goes on to list the achievements of His Majesty's reign—the many "improvements" and forms of "advancement" and "progress" that have "rendered the name of Britain famous in every quarter of the globe". Warming to his subject, Kippis asserts the ignorance of "any persons who... would depreciate the present times, in comparison with those which have preceded them."

Why invoke Kippis's now mostly forgotten work in reflecting upon the significance of the papers in this special issue? One answer is geographical. Kippis's book takes the reader round the world, following Cook's three voyages, and towards the end he describes the "melancholy accident" (p. 357) of the latter's death in Hawaii, the murderous conclusion to a life that began in Yorkshire and ended at the northern edge of the Polynesian Triangle. Another answer, however, relates to the ways in which Kippis—a Presbyterian minister as well as a biographer—characterizes the significance of Cook's life and death. As he puts it:

> The Connexion which has been opened up with these remote inhabitants of the world is the first step toward their improvement; and consequences may flow from it, which are beyond our present conceptions. Perhaps, our late voyages may be the means appointed by Providence, of spreading, in due time, the blessings of civilization among the numerous tribes of the South Pacific Ocean, and preparing them for holding an honourable rank among the nations of the earth... Nothing can more essentially contribute to the attainment of this great end, than a wise and rational introduction of the Christian religion (p. 380).

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These words are far removed in time and tone from the articles produced in this special issue, but they have significant thematic and even genealogical links with such works, which focus on religious innovations in the context of cultural change in contemporary Oceania. Writing in and for the inhabitants of one island located at one side of the Atlantic, Kippis orientates his readers temporally and geographically towards other islands, other cultural worlds. And if he surely saw Britain as the centre of his—if not *the*—world as well as of both divine and regal destiny, Kippis was prescient enough to suggest that the future might hold intriguing if unknown potential. Not only might the connection made with such remote peoples lead to consequences [1] beyond the imagination of the day, but the "tribes" of the South Pacific might be converted into "nations" of the earth, partners in a global order and a rapidly accelerating temporality that Cook's voyages helped both to delineate and, arguably, bring into existence. Kippis, after all, was writing at a pregnant moment in Western history, not only the heroic period of a burgeoning Enlightenment and expanding British empire, but also one that had (rather more troublingly for His Majesty) seen the liberation of the American "colonies"—political entities whose own empire would expand and globalize over a century later under the banner of the United States.

In addition to the royal authority, naval exploration and incipient commercial transactions that Kippis describes, one further element is present, and it is one that he sees as pre-eminent in significance: that of Christianity, assumed to be the ideal conduit through which to spread the blessings of civilization itself, and able to encompass, indeed to constitute, a wider culture of British civility, honour and even rationality. Overt expressions of faith do not play a very prominent part of the text of *Voyages Round the World*, but it is notable that they emerge here towards the end, providing a teleological motivation for the voyages "performed" by Cook and interpreted by Kippis.

So we have now encountered the following intersections: Christianity as a vehicle for literal and metaphorical mobility but also in dialogue with "culture"; Western notions of the modern alongside other histories; progress and Providence juxtaposed with a sense of temporal contingency; all are present in this eighteenth century account of the life of Cook [2] but also to a greater or lesser extent across the various case studies provided in this special issue, which encompass not merely the South Pacific but Oceania to its fullest extent. And arguably the same fundamental question is being asked by Kippis and the authors here: What *difference* does Christianity make—to "culture", to relations with the state or the nation, to the self?

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1. Such consequences include the gathering of scholars who have produced this special issue, since ethnographic interest has often followed the histories of colonial and post-colonial landscapes.

2. An explorer whose name is itself commemorated in the name of a group of South Pacific islands.

Naturally, we know that the "world" we describe has been transformed from Kippis's day—it is much smaller, proceeds more quickly, is subject to forms of space-time compression that have rendered the distances travelled by Cook commonplace. Furthermore, whereas Kippis describes a Pacific region before the advent and diffusion of Christianity, many of the contexts described in this special issue belong to areas where Christianity now has a complex and long-standing history, has become part of the religio-political landscape that contemporary believers inhabit and sometimes react against. So the question often becomes "What difference *has* Christianity made and how does its previous existence influence what impact it might have in the future?" Kippis and the present contributors peer through different ends of this particular tunnel of history, but both force us to reflect not only upon Christianity's past but also at how its followers interpret—constitute—that past even while promoting possibilities of change at personal and much wider levels of culture and society.

There is of course another book, written some two hundred years after Kippis's account, that also deals with Cook's travels to Hawaii. In *Islands of History* (1985), Marshall Sahlins spends rather more time than Kippis on the death of the English explorer, seeing in the latter's demise some clues as to what might happen when two cultures with very different historicities come into a kind of conjunction. In the context of this volume, the death of Cook provides a curious parallel with the death of the Australian Methodist minister Thomas Baker, whose murder in Fiji in 1867—and the subsequent historical consequences and attempts at cross-cultural reconciliation, hoping to lay the ghosts of the past, that have continued to this day—are so richly examined by Jacqueline Ryle. But if Sahlins's Cook represents a kind of *Deus ex Machina* in the context of Hawaiian society, a heroic if also tragic presage of sometimes rewarding, sometimes threatening contacts from other cultures, it is now impossible (assuming it was ever actually feasible) to see any of the islands that make up Oceania as insulated from "the world". Flows of cultural exchange move in all directions in, through and from the region. Furthermore, in his contribution to this special issue, Manfred Ernst notes that the majority of the world's two billion Christians are found no longer in Europe and North America but in Asia/Oceania, Africa, and Latin America/the Caribbean: the spiritual and the intellectual centre of Christianity seems to be moving to the southern hemisphere, to islands and land masses that are themselves far from Kippis's home.

Despite his focus on Hawaii's past, Sahlins's concern with the historicities of cultural reproduction alongside the contingencies of change surely remains relevant for us as we see how contributors examine Christianity as a potential agent of transformation in the region. This is not merely a parochial question, of course. Most recently, debates over the role of Christianity as potential catalyst for cultural and societal change have helped to constitute the fledgling sub-discipline of the anthropology of Christianity [3], and have been most clearly

3. For wider discussions see *e.g.* Robbins (2003, 2007); Cannell (2005, 2006); Hann (2007).

articulated with reference to forms of Pentecostalist and Charismatic worship that also figure prominently in the papers presented here. Thus José Casanova (2001: 434) has argued that Pentecostalism, as supposedly a highly decentralized religion, with no territorial roots as such, may well become the predominant global form of Christianity of the twenty-first century. In the process, it must engage not only with previous religious regimes but also with the economic, technological and social transformations that both challenge and constitute its activities within globalized (post-)modernity. Birgit Meyer (1999; see also Ryle's discussion, this issue) famously expresses the ambiguities of Ewe believers in Ghana caught between familial, social and religious ties and the demands of the modern capitalist economy, arguing that Pentecostalism provides a complex bridge between new and old worlds, allowing such worlds to remain in mutual contact and consciousness. Robbins presents a stronger case for the possibility of ruptures, discontinuities, caused by conversion to Pentecostalism, so that Pentecostal culture is described (2004: 117) as simultaneously preserving its distinctness from the cultures into which it comes into contact *and* engaging those cultures on their own terms, with the ultimate aim of a revalorization of the traditional spirit realms being encountered. Indeed, discourse on rupture becomes an important way in which Pentecostalism globalizes, making it in these terms a "culture against culture" (*ibid.*: 127).

I suggest that what we see in the papers gathered together for this volume is not just a tracking of the past and present fate of different forms of Protestantism in Oceania, but also a rich exploration of the complex modulations of Christian—and more particularly though not exclusively Protestant, at least in these pieces—orientations to what is perceived (and constructed) by believers as "culture". And what emerges is a more subtle exploration of Christianities in relation to cultural change than might be expressed by straightforward arguments over continuity or rupture per se. Some of the subtlety and interest emerges, as noted, because a version of Christianity often forms part of the "culture" that already exists in a given context. Here, the observations made by John Barker about the blending of history and ethnography are particularly pertinent, and his noting that ethnohistorical research has demonstrated that contemporary "traditions" in Pacific Island communities have been deeply influenced by Christianity, just as local understandings of Christianity may bear the imprints of indigenous conceptions of spiritual realities even when converts consciously struggle to wholly abandon their previous cultures. Barker's position is partly that identity in Melanesia has always been a "work in progress", but also that in most rural areas, new evangelists encounter cultural orders that already incorporate Christianity—a situation that inevitably shapes the reception of new versions of the religion. This standpoint corresponds, as he notes, with the "historical turn" in Melanesian ethnography, but we might also be reminded of Sahlins's pithy summation of the semiotic history of the Hawaiian context (1985: 147): "There is no such thing as an immaculate perception."

In the following, therefore, I aim to respond further to the articles in this special issue in three ways. First, I wish briefly to explore some of the common threads of wider cultural, social, economic and religious change that authors take as significant in their papers. We might now take it for granted that no society can ever exist in perfect stasis; but what are the significant and marked features of change that authors agree are influencing contemporary Oceania? This exploration then provides the context for my analysis of what the authors, taken as a whole, tell us about Christianity and change. Here, I am particularly interested in the question of how Christians themselves view the past in relation to the present and future, as it seems to me that the contributions often reveal how such comparison itself is a mode of chronic "self-making" praxis for the believers being described. Finally, I consider how these papers might help us to reflect on the methodological and analytical challenges of studying Christianity in relation to change. As an anthropologist, I am particularly concerned with how as ethnographers we might escape from some of our own intellectual islands—our own insular assumptions about how we define our objects of study.

Worlds of Change

The pieces provided in this issue cover Oceania but within that regional framework they explore a considerable variety of cultural contexts, from Auckland (which, as Yannick Fer notes, became the largest Polynesian city in the world during the 1970s) to the much more isolated community of the Urapmin studied by Robbins in Papua New Guinea. Generally, we come to understand how all such contexts are affected, directly or indirectly, by urbanization, which has encouraged as well as been constituted by high levels of migration from rural areas[4]. A startling result of such movements—some temporary, some permanent; some international, some more local—is that Oceania appears to have the largest concentration of immigrants in its population of any region in the world, many of them living in Australia and New Zealand. Pointing to the possible factors behind such developments, Manfred Ernst refers to rapid changes in society caused by World War II, prompted by both military and commercial impulses. In his analysis, the need to produce army supplies not only resulted in the development of infrastructure and jobs, but also exposed local populations to new notions of equality and self-determination derived from a new proximity to Western allies. Subsequently, the economic boom of the 1960s involved rapid urbanization and internal migration alongside the greater introduction of cash and wages systems. Gwendoline Malogne-Fer also refers to migration from the Pacific Islands after the Second World War in sketching the background to her fascinating discussion of the complex articulations of discourses relating to

4. For a recent consideration of religion in urban contexts, see Pinxten and Dikomitis (2009).

minority rights, multiculturalism and Christianity in New Zealand. While Gilles Vidal and Jacqueline Ryle do not refer to these issues relating to migration quite as directly in their discussions of Polynesian contexts, the issues do seem to form a background to their very different discussions of the changing trajectories of Christianity, for instance in Vidal's analysis of the historical, cultural and geographical factors behind the development of a "Pacific theology", or Ryle's tracing of challenges to *vanua* in Fiji in contexts of changing temporal and geographical relations.

Barker's piece addresses a longer durée of missionary history, and is explicitly oriented towards Melanesia, but again we see shifts in population towards towns and "modern" markets (documented also by Wardlow [2006], whose work Robbins draws upon)—indeed, for Barker such shifts should also encourage ethnographers to reflect on how to conduct fieldwork in the new urban churches that have extended their reach across regional networks [5]. At the same time, he raises questions about the shifting religio-political role of missions which have resonances for other pieces in this volume. In particular, how do individual missions vie for authority and function in relation to colonial, and then post-colonial, governments? The answer need not always imply a loss of legitimacy or a move in the direction of secularization. Thus from the mid-1960s the decolonization of established missions promoted indigenous clergy to positions of leadership and towards setting the grounds for the emergence of national churches in Melanesia. How national churches as well as governments vie in turn for legitimacy in still more globally oriented economic, cultural, political and religious spheres of operation becomes a further question for researchers of the contemporary situation to answer. For his part, Barker notes the prominence of Christianity in the national culture of Papua New Guinea—in popular media and politics—and the prominence of Christian references in campaign posters for a national election in 2007. Ernst also remarks on the fact that, since gaining independence, leaders of the Pacific Islands have drawn heavily on Christianity in formulating and shaping their political cultures, while governments have welcomed such travelling evangelists as Benny Hinn or Reinhard Bonnke as they address large rallies, all the while being treated as equivalent to heads of state.

Urbanization, marketization, migration, politicization, re-/neo-Pentecostalization—all imply new forms of association, potential fragmentation of ethnic and territorial forms of belonging, challenges constituted by new and mobile populations to the continuing social, political and religious salience of generations both physically older and reliant on more traditional forms of legitimacy.

5. Barker also makes some fascinating points about mission, notions of the rural and home society. He states for instance that many European missionaries conceived of their task in rural terms, as resistance to the "evils" of the rapid industrialization and migration to the cities that were occurring in their home countries. For example, and drawing on Wetherell (1977), he notes that Anglican bishops believed they saw in Papuan villages the image of a medieval English village with the priest paternally watching over the souls of his flock.

As we have seen, the legitimacy, rootedness and relevance of Christianity are all subject to renegotiation as urban and rural contexts in Oceania encounter the kinds of significant shifts documented by contributors to this volume, often towards forms that appear initially to stress a born-again experience divorced from immediate social, ethnic and spatial ties, oriented towards a world whose horizons reach beyond even those of the Pacific. Thus Fer refers to the transition—he calls it the evolution, though if so it is often reminiscent of a form of punctuated equilibrium—from "historical" Pentecostalism towards the latest charismatic waves associated demographically and ideologically with images of youth [6]. But if there is a clear message that emerges from the papers taken as a whole it is surely that such processes do not result in a one-way stream of history towards a globally homogeneous form of modernization, secularization, or even necessarily any particular form of Christianization. Oceania may, as Ernst implies, provide a useful microcosm for examining processes occurring in the world as a whole, but that does not mean that the microcosm provides a unitary set of responses to these agents of change, or that such apparent globality combined with an overt focus on "the individual" must imply neglect of proximate social concerns. Thus, much of Malogne-Fer's paper is taken up by examining differential attitudes to female ministry among churches attempting precisely to negotiate their identities in a country, New Zealand, marked by dynamics of secularization and religious pluralization.

Here, reference to the work of a scholar who has devoted much of his attention to examining processes of religious migration in another part of the world may be useful. Manuel Vasquez (2008: 165) notes that in providing infrastructural support for and entering into transnational, global or diasporic flows, religion may involve a response to dislocation through transposing sacred spaces from nation of origin to nation of settlement; or it may help to form transnational social fields, new spaces of sociability generated through chains of ties spanning multiple nation-states. It may be involved in the emergence of new and hybrid forms of identity, which combine hitherto disparate cosmologies, ritual practices, and institutional forms; or it may lead to the reaffirmation of "old" identities in diaspora, through recovery and/or invention of primordial origins. Such modalities may occur in the same context serially or even simultaneously. The point is to avoid deterministic approaches to any religious form as it responds to but is also realized through mobility. Nor should we see the analysis of religions as exhausted by revealing their social and cultural effects, or in some

6. Here, there are some parallels with my own analysis of shifts between classical Pentecostalism and newer, more overtly globalizing, charismatic forms in Sweden, where revival has been associated with younger generations but also attempts to escape from the chains of history that are seen to bind now established Pentecostal congregations (*e.g.* Coleman 2000; forthcoming). This is of course a classic trope of the bureaucratization of charisma and, in turn, the charismatic response.

cases the apparent lack of them. Yet, acknowledging the varied consequences of religious affiliation in times of mobility, as well as the complexities of the analysis, does not imply that we should remove religion from considerations of causality entirely, for instance seeing it as purely epiphenomenal, irrelevant to flows of history or ruptures that may create transformation as much as reproduction.

In the following, I follow just one route through the possible pathways of exploring the relationship between contemporary Oceanic Protestantisms and change, and it is one prompted by a phrase I invoked much earlier in relation to the Anthropology of Christianity as a whole: that of (Pentecostalism as a) "culture against culture". Of course there are a number of assumptions contained even within such a short phrase. First, there is the sense that Pentecostalism or any form of Christianity might somehow exist beyond a particular or alternative form of culture. Then there is the implied notion of a kind of temporality, a sense that a new form of faith can supersede what has gone before, perhaps in a totalizing fashion. And yet, as we noted above, there is much ambiguity contained in the single word "against". Does it mean simple replacement, or revalorization, or competition between actually rather similar cultural forms, or a more long-lasting engagement—even a moiety—between opposites [7]? Or a combination of such orientations? In my view, the contributions to this issue allow us to reflect on these questions in a way that permits us to see the complexities and nuances—even the contradictions—of such orientations, as we see how Christians wrestle with manifestations of the past and the present that have ontological significance, and that depend on a frequently conscious form of self-construction through comparison between self and temporal, cultural, and religious others. Another way of putting this is that I am interested in how the papers juxtapose versions of history (processes of reproduction and transformation over time evident in any given cultural field) with religiously-motivated historiographies (how Christians themselves understand and construct the present in relation to the past, often in ways that have performative effects both in the present and indeed on history as I have defined it). But rather than confining myself to the notion of Christianity (or even Pentecostalism) acting only against culture I want to explore the distinctions and resonances among three orientations: those of being "of", "against" and "for" culture—with the latter term implying the widest sense of what is perceived to be the prevailing set of religious, economic, social and ethnic arrangements in a given context. By "being of" culture I mean a state close to that assumed (and claimed) by Kippis for the relationship between (Protestant) Christianity and British civilization, a sense of the co-constitution of the two, even if one ultimately has greater moral legitimacy. By "being against" I mean taking a stance in opposition to a prior religious, social, etc. arrangement, such as a "traditional" religious form that is deemed to be idolatrous by believers. As we have seen, Pentecostalists in particular may invoke traditional forms,

7. For a discussion of Pentecostalism as a "part-culture", inevitably in dialogue with other cultural forms, see Coleman 2006.

indicating their continued power, but also provide them with a new and negatively charged moral valency. By "being for" I mean the decision to deploy culture as a resource, this time giving it a positive moral charge, thus expressing the Christian message through a reconstruction or redeployment of such culture in an often creative way. I argue that each of these stances can be discerned at various points in the articles in this special issue; but also that the interesting points of articulation are frequently those that blur the boundaries between such orientations, in ways that can also challenge the boundaries between cultural reproduction and transformation.

Christianities: Of, Against, and For Culture

Let me take each of these orientations in turn. To exemplify a form of Christianity that can be regarded as "of" its surrounding culture I invoke Ryle's discussion of the "three solid foundations" of Fiji society, Church, Government and Culture. These are depicted as interwoven in a *bulubulu*, a ritual of reconciliation described in a national newspaper where tradition and the Church can come together, even as their murderous separation in the past (resulting for instance in the death of Baker) is subject to a remodelling in the present. Similarly, Ryle refers to another *bulubulu* that takes place at the Methodist Church Conference in 1996, in which some 500 people publicly atoned for a sin committed against a white plantation owner—a sin that had occurred after their ancestors had been Christianized in the nineteenth century. Among the interesting features of these ceremonies is the simultaneous acceptance that Methodism has a particular, delimited history in Fiji—a beginning that can be documented—and yet can participate in and be in some sense enacted through traditional forms of ritual. Indeed, Bush, inspired by one of the theologians discussed by Gilles Vidal (Tuwere), relates the traditional *bulubulu* explicitly to Christian notions of sin and salvation. Similarly, Ryle notes that many Fijians see the *Kalou* (Christian God) in very much the same way as they view their *Kalou Vu* (ancestral Gods).

The point here is not to see such Christianity in Fiji as either static or as existing without conflict or critique; but it is to emphasize the extent to which a conscious and mutual assimilation of categories can take place, and one which sees continued value in such complementarity—such interweaving—rather than simple appropriation by one of the other. Christianity is thus expressed through semiotic forms explicitly derived from what is seen as a pre-existing cultural framework. Although precise comparisons are not possible, it is intriguing that in his piece John Barker discusses the ways in which in Australia and Canada some seminaries and programmes at theological colleges foster the exploration of connections between religious traditions and Christianity as a positive good, and suggests that "similar surprises may await us if we open our eyes to the

possibility in Melanesia" [8]. In the Pākehā churches described by Malogne-Fer, being of Polynesian origin may actually be interpreted as having a genuine Christian identity, and a "natural" capacity to work for the church.

It is fair to say, on the other hand, that much of the emphasis of papers in this volume has been on examples of Christianity "against" culture, even in opposition to culture that clearly contains forms of Christian faith. Of course, there is a particular temporal dimension to this emphasis that is internal to Christianity itself, as papers frequently contrast long-established and "bureaucratized" Christian organizations with forms of explicit revival. However, the more interesting point is to see the different and nuanced ways such revivalist forms can themselves pose in opposition to existing circumstances.

The piece by Joel Robbins deals—among many other things—with a context of dramatic conversion (in the case of the Urapmin) at quite a detailed level of cultural analysis, and it provides us with a case-study where we can examine the extent to which Christianity *qua* Christianity acts through opposition to previous cultural forms. Robbins notes for instance that just as gender once organized Urapmin understanding of various fundamental aspects of life, such as kinds of food, technology, knowledge, places, and ways of life, these are now understood through the black/white opposition—a totalizing shift in itself. Christianity is not to be held solely responsible for this change since political and economic dimensions of the colonial process were also significant in bringing it about. And yet the new religion helps to make this opposition coherent for the Urapmin: Christianity comes from the white world, and because Jesus is white, the black/white opposition becomes cosmologically anchored. With the abandonment of traditional religion we see the replacement of male rituals that themselves once rooted gender differences in cosmological dramas given the Christian insistence that all people, no matter what gender, are responsible to the same extent for their own salvation. What is interesting here is not just the extent to which a dramatic movement "against" previous aspects of culture is taking place, but also the meta-message of Robbins's analysis: he is explicitly defining changes in cultural values as central to wider processes of cultural transformation.

Others present more "gradualist" analyses of opposition as transformation [9]. Thus Barker's historical analysis looks at previous contexts of Christian diffusion

8. Here the connections with my category of acting "for" culture are evident; the difference is one of degree, but it revolves around the extent to which connections are acknowledged (being "of" culture) or are actively created in ways seen to be novel (being "for").

9. Yannick Fer perhaps provides an example in between the gradualist and more rupture-oriented depictions of transformation. He refers initially to the evangelical "new birth" paradigm that, in Polynesia, as anywhere else, involves a form of conversion encouraging the believer to distance themselves from compulsory memberships that previously defined their identity. This paradigm might therefore lead to a "weakening of cultural boundaries"—or we might rather say the replacement of one set of cultural boundaries with another—and yet, as Fer notes, a "reformulation" rather than a mere rejection of "Pacific culture" might also be favoured.

as well as those of the present. He notes how over time the Church became a familiar fixture of local life in Melanesia, providing people with a new centre of identity focused upon the village and associated organizations rather than on kin groups and exchanges sponsored by big men. The kind of Christianity that gradually became "of" culture in insular and lowlands Melanesia—strongly associated and in places conflated with local ethnic and political identities—was also in due course likely to be relatively resistant to "third phase evangelists" whose arrival might be perceived as a challenge, not just to faith but also acting "against" (my word) community unity. Here the juxtaposition of two rather different paradigms of Christianity, "of" and "against" culture, is hardly without its ironies, as Barker notes that events today may appear reminiscent of early missionary encounters—history repeating itself, but with a vicious twist. The new, well educated, mainly conservative evangelical Christians regard the long-established local Church with its toleration of *kastom* as little better than paganism.

Barker's piece, then, presents different forms of Christianity in interaction, with the new reframing the "tradition" represented by the old. Here I think we encounter a useful parallel with Ryle's discussion of *bulubulu*, for there is indeed also a sting in the tail of her description of the contemporary fate of this reconciliation ceremony. The ritual performed in 2003 for the unfortunate and long-dead (but certainly not forgotten) Reverend Baker was, she notes, markedly different from former "traditional" reconciliations, not least because Pentecostal and Methodist pastors led villagers in a period of prayer prior to the ceremony itself. Thus the efficacy of traditional ritual forms was ultimately challenged in the present, and the continuing aims of reconciliation and healing of the land were seen by some as realizable only through preparatory rites such as the identification of sin, confession, fasting, praying, individual reconciliation with God, and communal reconciliation. The explanation by Reverend Kurulo of the Christian Mission Fellowship is striking in its deployment of a metaphor at once spatially and theologically charged, and moreover one that refers to orienting the moral gaze "away" from (indeed, "against") certain forms of cultural entanglement. Previous forms of forgiveness are said to have occurred at "horizontal" (*i.e.* social, sometimes reciprocal) rather than "vertical" (*i.e.* divinely oriented, individualized and self-empowering) levels. We see how an invocation of "traditional" culture and a form of spiritual warfare are achieved through the same set of actions, and how reconciliation with one aspect of the past (the murder of a missionary) is exorcism of another aspect (that of the salience of ancestral spiritual power) [10].

10. Fer also explores the ambiguities of the relations between new forms of evangelicalism and older social ties. He states that, in rural and remote areas, missionary work often does not begin with massive open air meetings, but through the less visible influence of converts coming back to their village or their island. While mobility has enabled them to distance themselves from traditional structures of authority, they still have a place, a latent role within local kinship and solidarity networks. Thus they can use this ambivalent positioning to spread new beliefs within their community.

This all adds up to a remaking of the future course of history through a performative religious historiography, in other words one where the relationship of the past to the present is invoked only to be dislocated/relocated. As Ryle points out, one of the ironies of this adjustment in relation to the past is that it occurs through extensive ritual action—the kind of action that Pentecostalists often claim to avoid. Being "against" culture is more complex and ambivalent than it might first appear, as indeed both Robbins and Meyer appreciate.

How, then, might we think finally of how charismatic and neo-Pentecostal Christians act creatively "for" culture, in ways that go beyond a negation of the moral valency of past spirit and ritual forms? In this respect, I find Fer's discussion of the movement called *Island Breeze* fascinating. He notes that the reluctance of younger generations in the Polynesian Islands to accept hierarchical elder authority can yet encompass a more complex redefinition of the links between culture and religion, involving the rehabilitation of bodily expressions like dances as an authentic way to be both Christian and Polynesian. This seems to be occurring at the intersection of local and more "global" or at least diasporic cultural pressures. Thus Fer documents how Island Breeze was launched in 1979 by the American Samoan Sosene Le'au, after he had been in contact with a New Zealander leader of *Youth With a Mission* and attended a school of evangelism at the YWAM campus in Kona, Big Island. Sosene Le'au began by leading his own school, training a mixed group of twelve students that included a majority of Samoans and two Hawaiians. It is notable that most of these students came from a mainline Protestant familial background but had converted to Pentecostal churches that did not welcome—were "against"—Polynesian cultural expressions. The students were thus seeking a way to re-establish a link with what they perceived to be their cultural heritage within the framework of a predominantly Western Charismatic Protestantism. Thus, during ritual praise, notes Fer, they began to move and dance in a Polynesian way. And this ritual action itself became an embodied semiotic form that could become mobile, could migrate into new contexts and become a means of evangelical outreach among young Christians in the Pacific.

Thus Island Breeze began to go on tour, and the combination of Charismatic Protestantism and "cultural expressions" has often been understood by youth as a way to challenge "tradition" but also to demonstrate their own understanding of culture. Heritage is thereby invested with Spirit—and one that itself invokes self-consciously articulated culture alongside a valorization of individual choice. In my terms, again, a performative ritualized historiography is articulated, and one that is helping to mould the history of evangelical expressions in the Pacific. Island Breeze even seems capable of being assimilated within the global evangelical paradigm of new birth, and in this sense it indicates the complexities of the social and religious fields towards which young migrants must direct their gaze, from more local Pacific communities to wider circles of

Indigenous Peoples who are recognized within globally-oriented definitions of human rights and claims.

It might seem that Fer's discussion of Island Breeze is a cultural world away from Vidal's depiction of trajectories in the work of Pacific theologians. Yet, I would argue that both cases present parallels if seen through the analytical lens of working "for" culture. Vidal states that he regards theology as a privileged locus of observation of the evolution of Christianity in Oceania, but we might also see it as creating, constituting, such Christianity not at the level of evangelically-tinged popular culture (see Island Breeze) but at the level of elite intellectual production. Pacific Theology and Island Breeze, although ideologically distinct, are both creations by cultural "entrepreneurs" acting in the context of the intersections of Western and Oceanic landscapes, traditions and ways of thinking. If Island Breeze seeks the positive in Pacific cultural expressions—in a sense acknowledging the "horizontal" as well as the "vertical" plane of expression, even if on evangelical terms—Pacific theology generally seeks to avoid parochialism while appealing to locally rooted imagery—"coconut theology"—in the development of an autochthonous gospel that is not seen as an oxymoron. Thus the positioning of the theology and its gaze towards worlds beyond the region are simultaneously expressed in the sense, following Tuwere, that: "Il doit y avoir un lien direct entre l'Océanie et Israël, et non *via* Sydney, Londres ou Rome."

These modulations of Christianity, "of", "against" and "for" culture explore the degrees to which especially contemporary Pentecostalism negotiates its relationship to what are seen as proximate social landscapes and/or histories of given contexts. The very act of distinguishing a given form of Christianity from other faiths or attitudes demonstrates the actual impossibility of achieving autonomy from such social and cultural worlds. Here, then, we might also be reminded of Dilley's (1999) exploration of the mutual implication of context and interpretation, of how disconnections as well as connections are constantly being made and remade in social life as well as social scientific analysis, with political as well as historical consequences.

Insular Anthropology?

I finish with some very brief reflections on what this collection of papers can say to anthropology as a whole, lifting our gaze from regional to broader intellectual horizons. Some points are obvious but are perhaps worth stating. For instance we are being asked to reflect upon comparison at very different temporal and geographical scales, from small societies to whole nations and regions, but it seems reasonable to argue that this juxtaposition of fields of inquiry is indeed a powerful way to grasp what may—or may not—be the influence of "Christianity" in a given region. Such comparison is occurring even though we can appreciate how the possibility of isolating any "bounded" field,

temporally or historically, is in practice problematic and contingent. Barker makes this point in another way in his invocation of John Peel's *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, where Peel notes (2000: 24) that the study of Christianity in Nigeria necessarily involves the analyst coming upon people in the *middle* of something: history in Nigeria, or Hawaii, or Oceania as a whole, clearly does not begin or become definitively defined by the arrival and actions of European colonialists.

Mention of Nigeria prompts me to point out a forms of comparison that I think is largely inchoate in the papers of this special issue, but is there at least as a potentiality [11]. That is the possibility of framing a study of Oceania not through its contacts (only) with the West, but also through a consideration of how it might compare with other "Southern" regions where migration, marketization and Pentecostalization are also proceeding apace, such as West Africa. This form of juxtaposition has already been suggested by Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001; in their case between Africa and Latin America), but clearly there is much more work to be done that adopts such an approach. At the same time, I was struck by the relative lack of explicit "internal" comparison between regions covered by papers in this volume, between Melanesia and Polynesia. Nonetheless, as the papers indicate powerfully and clearly, there is much to be gained in considering how they form a "region" that can be analyzed in its own right and yet also contains histories and historiographies that resonate further as we attempt to understand globalization, migration and Pentecostalization in our own ethnographic voyages around the world.

Simon COLEMAN
University of Toronto
simon.coleman@utoronto.ca

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"Christianities in Oceania: Historical Genealogies and Anthropological Insularities"

I explore the themes contained in this special issue by asking how papers prompt us to ask: What difference does Christianity make—to "culture", to relations with the state or nation, to the self? This question must be inflected by the realization that Christianity has a long-standing history in Oceania, and has become part of the religio-political landscape that contemporary believers inhabit and sometimes react against. Posing the question also involves an examination of how papers juxtapose versions of history (broader processes of reproduction and transformation over time) with religiously-motivated historiographies (how Christians themselves understand and construct the present in relation to the past). I use these reflections to argue for the usefulness of exploring distinctions and resonances among three orientations towards culture discernible in the papers as a whole: those of being "of", "against" and "for" culture.

Key words: culture, Christianity, history, historiography, transformation.

« Christianismes en Océanie : généalogies historiques et insularités anthropologiques »

J'examine les thèmes traités dans ce numéro en cherchant en quoi ces articles nous amènent à nous demander : qu'est-ce qui change avec le christianisme, au plan de la « culture », des relations avec l'État ou la nation, de la relation à soi ? Cette question doit prendre en compte le fait que le christianisme a en Océanie une longue histoire ; il est devenu partie intégrante du paysage politico-religieux au sein duquel les croyants contemporains se situent ou contre lequel ils réagissent. Poser cette question implique également d'analyser la manière dont les articles juxtaposent des versions de l'histoire (vastes processus de reproduction et de transformation sur le temps long) avec des historiographies religieusement orientées (comment les Chrétiens eux-mêmes comprennent et construisent le présent en relation avec le passé). J'utilise ces réflexions pour défendre l'idée qu'il est utile d'examiner les répercussions de trois orientations bien distinctes vis-à-vis de la culture, qui sont perceptibles dans l'ensemble des articles : être « de » la culture, « contre » la culture ou « pour » la culture.

Mots-clés : culture, christianisme, histoire, historiographie, transformation.

"Cristianismo en Oceanía: genealogías históricas e insularidades antropológicas"

Examino aquí los temas tratados en este número intentando ver en qué sentido estos artículos nos llevan a preguntarnos: ¿Qué cambia con el cristianismo, en el plano de la "cultura", de las relaciones con el estado o la nación, en la relación a sí? Esta pregunta debe tomar en cuenta el hecho que el cristianismo tiene en Oceanía una larga historia, y se volvió parte integrante del paisaje político-religioso en el cual los creyentes contemporáneos se sitúan, o contra el cual reaccionan. Plantear esta pregunta implica también analizar la manera en que los artículos yuxtaponen versiones de la historia (vastos procesos de reproducción y de transformación de largo alcance) con las historiografías religiosamente orientadas (cómo los mismos cristianos comprenden y construyen el presente en relación con el pasado). Utilizo estas reflexiones para defender la idea de la utilidad de examinar las repercusiones de tres orientaciones bien distintas frente a la cultura, que son perceptibles en el conjunto de los artículos: ser "de" la cultura, estar "contra" la cultura o "a favor" de la cultura.

Palabras clave: cultura, cristianismo, historia, historiografía, transformación.